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C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 004602

SIPDIS

STATE PASS AIT/W, INR/EAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/16/2020

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: IS IT VOTE-BUYING OR VOTE-SELLING IN CHIAYI COUNTY?

REF: TAIPEI 4356

Classified By: AIT DIRECTOR DOUGLAS PAAL, REASON(S): 1.4 (B/D)

11. (C) EVEN KMT CHAIRMAN MA YING-JEOU WAS TAKEN BY SURPRISE ON NOVEMBER 12, WHEN 10,000 KMT SUPPORTERS ARRIVED TO HELP HIM INAUGURATE THE CHIAYI COUNTY KMT MAGISTERIAL CANDIDATE'S OFFICE. TO DATE, THIS IS THE LARGEST NUMBER OF PEOPLE TO COME OUT FOR ANY KMT ELECTION RALLY DURING THE 3 IN 1 ELECTIONS. THE ELECTION OF THE DPP CANDIDATE IN CHIAYI COUNTY IS CONSIDERED GENERALLY TO BE A DONE DEAL, AND NO ONE ASSUMED THE DPP HAD EVEN MUCH REASON TO RUN A DYNAMIC CAMPAIGN (REFTEL). IN FACT, THE RELUCTANTLY DRAFTED KMT CANDIDATE CHEN MING-CHEN HAD NO ILLUSIONS HE COULD WIN THIS RACE. POLITICAL OBSERVERS CONTEND THAT EVEN THIS SHOWING OF KMT SUPPORT DOESN'T REALLY INDICATE THE "MA EFFECT" CAN TURN A LOSER INTO A WINNER.

12. (C) LONG-TIME AIT/K CONTACT, HO CHIA-JUNG, A COLORFUL (FORMER KMT, SWITCHED TO DPP, AND THEN JUMPED TO TSU) FORMER DPP 2001 MAGISTERIAL CANDIDATE IN CHIAYI COUNTY EXPLAINED TO AIT/K THAT THE SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED APPEARANCE OF 10,000 KMT SUPPORTERS COMING OUT TO GREET CHAIRMAN MA CANNOT BE EXPLAINED BY MA'S SO-CALLED CHARISMA. IN FACT, HO SUSPECTS, MA HAD NO EXPECTATIONS THAT HIS PRO FORMA CAMPAIGN VISIT TO DEEP-GREEN CHIAYI COUNTY COULD EVER DRAW A CROWD OF THIS SIZE. HO COMMENTED THAT PEOPLE SHOULD REALIZE THE REAL SURPRISE IN CHIAYI COUNTY WAS THAT THESE TEN THOUSAND KMT SUPPORTERS DID NOT REALLY COME TO HEAR MA TELL THEM ANYTHING, RATHER THEY CAME OUT TO DELIVER AN UNSPOKEN MESSAGE TO THE CHAIRMAN: THEIR VOTES ARE FOR SALE.

13. (C) IN CHIAYI COUNTY FACTIONS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN STRONGER THAN PARTIES. THE KMT FACTION THERE, IN FACT, STRONGLY SUPPORTED WANG JYN-PING DURING THE KMT CHAIRMANSHIP ELECTION, EXPLAINED HO CHIA-JUNG. HOWEVER, ONCE MA YING-JEOU WAS ELECTED TO THAT POSITION, THE CHIAYI COUNTY KMT FACTION FOUND THEMSELVES IN A PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT POSITION. UNFAMILIAR WITH MA, BUT KNOWING HOW PRISTINE THE NEW CHAIRMAN'S IMAGE WAS, THE FACTION LEADERS INVITED MA TO COME DOWN TO CHIAYI TWICE. HO SAID HE HEARD FROM SOME IN ATTENDANCE THAT THE MEETINGS WERE PAINFUL. THE CHIAYI COUNTY KMT FACTION NEEDS MONEY AND RESOURCES FROM THE KMT CENTRAL OFFICE TO CARRY OUT ITS WORK IN THE COUNTY, BUT APPARENTLY MA NEVER OFFERED RESOURCES AND THE FACTION LEADERS FELT IT WAS TOO AWKWARD TO ASK SOMEONE LIKE MA FOR HELP WHEN THEY THEMSELVES HAD NOT BACKED HIM FOR THE CHAIRMANSHIP. THOSE TWO MEETINGS, SAID HO, RESULTED IN NO AGREEMENTS OR ARRANGEMENTS. THE CENTRAL KMT AND THE LOCAL FACTION COULDN'T EVEN COMPROMISE ON A MAGISTERIAL CANDIDATE, WHICH SAYS HO IS WHY NON-FACTION MEMBER CANDIDATE CHEN MING-CHEN WAS DRAFTED.

14. (C) HO CHIA-JUNG NOTED THAT THE KMT FACTION MOBILIZED THIS LARGE CROWD SPECIFICALLY TO GIVE CHAIRMAN MA A CLEAR VISUAL. THEY WANTED HIM TO SEE THAT THEY HAVE VOTES TO DELIVER AND CHIPS WITH WHICH TO BARGAIN. HO EXPLAINED THIS "SHOW" WAS PUT ON FOR MA TO LET HIM KNOW THAT TIME FOR A SERIOUS TALK WITH KMT FACTION LEADERS IN CHIAYI COUNTY IS RUNNING OUT. IF AN AGREEMENT IS REACHED WITH CHAIRMAN MA OVER RESOURCES AND MONEY, SAYS HO, THE KMT FACTION LIKELY WILL DELIVER THE VOTES TO CANDIDATE CHEN IN CHIAYI COUNTY.

(C) COMMENT. WINNING THE KMT CHAIRMANSHIP LEFT MA IN THE DIFFICULT POSITION OF HAVING TO FACE THE MULTITUDE OF WANG JYN-PING SUPPORTERS ACROSS THE ISLAND. WHILE MANY WONDERED HOW THE BEHIND-THE-SCENES NEGOTIATING WAS GOING, THIS IS A DRAMATIC PUBLIC VIEW OF WANG JYN-PING SUPPORTERS OFFERING UP SUPPORT TO MA, ALBEIT FOR A SUPPOSED PRICE. WHETHER THE KMT FACTION IN CHIAYI COUNTY WILL DELIVER VOTES OR NOT FOR THE KMT MAGISTERIAL CANDIDATE REMAINS TO BE SEEN. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE GENERAL ASSUMPTION THAT THE KMT'S DRAFT PICK CANNOT WIN THE MAGISTERIAL SEAT IN DEEP GREEN CHIAYI COUNTY, ONE MUST WONDER IF THE GOODS WOULD BE WORTH THE PRICE CHAIRMAN MA MIGHT HAVE TO PAY. END COMMENT.
Paal